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Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

Update on the proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Forty-sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Update on the proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" (A/72/720) (hereinafter referred to as the "update" report). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 14 February 2018.

2. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General initially proposed a regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016–2017. At that time, the Committee expressed the view that a clearer and more detailed proposal should be presented for consideration by the General Assembly, including information on locations and geographical coverage; an analysis of the expected workload and a corresponding staffing structure; clearly defined reporting lines; and a detailed cost proposal, taking into consideration both one-time and recurring post and non-post requirements, as well as potential contributions from prospective host countries (see A/70/7, paras. VI.6–VI.12). In paragraphs 7 and 84 of its resolution 70/247, the Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee and requested the Secretary-General to present a revised proposal on the regional restructuring of OHCHR.

3. The Secretary-General subsequently submitted his report entitled "Proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/141" (A/71/218 and Corr.1). In its related report A/71/584, the Advisory Committee indicated that it saw merit in the proposal of the Secretary-General to

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strengthen the field presence of OHCHR and recommended that the Assembly approve the proposals of the Secretary-General, subject to a number of comments and recommendations. The Assembly, in its subsequent decisions 71/546 and 72/547, deferred its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General on the regional restructuring of OHCHR and, therefore, the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the Committee remain before the Assembly.

4. The Secretary-General has now, in the remaining months of the tenure of the current High Commissioner, submitted to Member States the aforementioned "update" report, which contains a revised set of conclusions and actions for the consideration of the General Assembly (A/72/720, paras. 26–29). According to the Secretary-General, the "update" report was submitted in order to: (a) update relevant information; (b) facilitate the related ongoing review in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019; and (c) also facilitate consideration of further developments in the proposed structure and approach to the regional restructuring derived from consultations with Member States (see A/72/720, summary). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the presentation of a new or updated report was raised in the context of the discussions of the Fifth Committee during the main part of the seventy-second session of the Assembly.

5. **The Advisory Committee points out that there is no specific decision of the General Assembly in which it requested the preparation of another report on this matter. Therefore, the submission of the "update" report raises procedural questions, including whether the report has been submitted under the Secretary-General's own authority.**

6. **The overall strengthening of the OHCHR field presence remains the basic premise of the proposal and the "update" report. However, the Advisory Committee notes that the "update" report contains post and non-post resource implications under the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019. Therefore, in the absence of a decision of the General Assembly on the substance of the original proposal of the Secretary-General, the Committee considers that it would have been preferable for the Secretary-General to present, if deemed necessary, a revised proposal.**

7. **Given that the original proposal of the Secretary-General and the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee thereon still remain before the General Assembly for its consideration, the Committee, in the present report, limits itself to some observations without expressing a formal view on the specific content of the "update" report, including on the actions contained in section V of the "update" report.**

8. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in the original proposal, the Secretary-General envisaged 13 field locations, comprising six existing and two new regional offices, and five subregional offices[1] (see A/71/584, para. 5). According to the "update" report, the OHCHR field presence would now comprise 12 regional offices

[1] Previously, in the original proposal, the locations and geographical scope were envisaged as follows: (a) strengthening of six existing regional offices: Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Brussels, Dakar and Panama City; (b) establishment of two new regional offices: Istanbul and Washington, D.C.; (c) maintenance of four other existing regional offices as subregional offices: Bishkek, Pretoria, Santiago and Suva; and (d) establishment of an additional sub-office for the Caribbean in Barbados.

but no subregional offices[2] (see A/72/720, para. 11). **As the "update" report does not specify the countries envisaged to be covered by each of the proposed 12 regional offices, the Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide to the General Assembly, at the time of its consideration of this matter, an updated list in this regard.**

9. The Advisory Committee recalls that in the original proposal, the Secretary-General indicated that each of the regional offices would require a core staffing structure based on workload and assembled through the establishment, redeployment, reclassification and abolishment of a number of D-1, P-5, P-4, P-3, P-2 and General Service (Other level) posts (see A/71/584, paras. 20–31). Specifically with respect to new posts, the "update" report envisages the establishment of three new D-1 posts (A/72/720, para. 17 (d)), instead of the previous one new D-1 post and two new P-5 posts (A/71/584, para. 22 (d)).

10. **The Advisory Committee continues to be of the view that staffing levels should be adjusted to allow for operational flexibility, based on actual workload, the specific needs of each regional office, and the available resources for technical assistance. The Committee expects that details on the forecasted workload, needs and resources of each individual regional office will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of consideration of this matter, including a clarification on the work of the regional offices and of OHCHR headquarters in Geneva with respect to technical assistance and with respect to the universal periodic review process (see also A/71/584, paras. 4 and 28–30).**

11. On a related matter, namely, the authority delegated to the regional offices, the Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General, within the context of his current managerial reform initiatives, intends to delegate additional managerial authority to heads of field offices (see A/72/492, paras. 66–79). **The Committee expects that clarifications on the issue of delegation of authority to the regional OHCHR offices will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of consideration of this matter.**

12. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in his original proposal, which pertained to the programme budget for the biennium 2016–2017, the Secretary-General indicated that the reallocation of post and non-post resources between Geneva and the field would be resource-neutral (see A/71/584, para. 32). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the "update" report, which would pertain to the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019, would entail a reduction of post and non-post resources in the amount of $450,200 under section 24, Human rights. **The Committee trusts that detailed cost implications will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of consideration of the "update" report of the Secretary-General (see also A/71/584, para. 36).**

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[2] According to the Secretary-General, under the "update" report, OHCHR would have 12 regional offices, as follows: (a) Addis Ababa: Regional Office for East Africa; (b) Bangkok: Regional Office for Asia; (c) Beirut: Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa; (d) Bishkek: Regional Office for Central Asia; (e) Bridgetown: Regional Office for North America and the Caribbean; (f) Brussels: Regional Office for Europe; (g) Dakar: Regional Office for West Africa; (h) Panama City: Regional Office for Central America; (i) Pretoria: Regional Office for Southern Africa; (j) Santiago: Regional Office for South America; (k) Suva: Regional Office for the Pacific; and (l) Yaoundé: Regional Office for Central Africa (incorporating the current Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa).

Conclusion

13. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide further clarifications and details, including on the observations noted above, on the proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the time of the consideration of this matter by the General Assembly.**